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Harmony with Nature

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 71/223, by which the Assembly requested the President of the Assembly to convene, at its seventy-second session, an interactive dialogue on Harmony with Nature to commemorate International Mother Earth Day in April 2018, and requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly, at its seventy-third session, a report on the implementation of the resolution.

The report draws on contributions to the eighth interactive dialogue on Harmony with Nature, held on 23 April 2018, that address Earth jurisprudence in the implementation of sustainable production and consumption patterns in harmony with nature and trends in the implementation of Earth jurisprudence in law, policy, education and public engagement.

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I. Introduction

1. On 20 December 2017, the General Assembly adopted resolution 72/223, its ninth resolution on Harmony with Nature, by which it requested the President of the Assembly to convene, at its seventy-second session, an interactive dialogue, to be held at the plenary meetings to be convened during the commemoration of International Mother Earth Day on 23 April 2018, with the participation of Member States, United Nations organizations, independent experts and other stakeholders. The purpose of the dialogue was to discuss the role of Earth jurisprudence [1] in implementing sustainable production and consumption patterns, with the ultimate goal of ensuring that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness to achieve sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature, as stated in target 12.8 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

2. The eighth interactive dialogue of the General Assembly was held in commemoration of International Mother Earth Day and was framed by the report of the Secretary-General on Harmony with Nature (A/72/175) and Assembly resolution 72/223.

3. The present report provides a description of some of the highlights of the interactive dialogue and the trends in implementing Earth jurisprudence through legislation, policy, education and public engagement worldwide. Panellists in the dialogue drew attention to Earth-centred law and ecological economics and their application in the interest of sustainable production and consumption patterns in harmony with nature. They described promising approaches, trends and achievements, many of them initiated or promoted by the members of the Harmony with Nature Knowledge Network in their different areas of expertise.[2]

II. Highlights of the interactive dialogue of the General Assembly on Harmony with Nature to commemorate International Mother Earth Day

4. On 23 April 2018, the General Assembly held its eighth interactive dialogue on Harmony with Nature at United Nations Headquarters in commemoration of International Mother Earth Day.[3] The theme of the dialogue was "Earth jurisprudence in the implementation of sustainable production and consumption patterns in harmony with nature". The morning and afternoon panels included the participation of members of the Harmony with Nature Knowledge Network.[4]

5. In his opening remarks, the President of the General Assembly acknowledged the extreme toll that current levels and patterns of consumption and production had taken on human lives, well-being and health, and on the health of the planet. The President emphasized that living in harmony with nature implied balance, and that significant changes to the world's economic and legal systems were required in order to reverse the dominant current production and consumption patterns and attain the targets proposed under the Sustainable Development Goals.

[1] "Earth jurisprudence" refers to a philosophy of law and human governance in which humans are only one part of a wider community of beings and the well-being of each member of that community is dependent on the well-being of the Earth as a whole.

[2] See http://www.harmonywithnatureun.org/experts/.

[3] A summary of the dialogue is available at www.harmonywithnatureun.org/dialogues/.

[4] The panel members were: Juliana Braz, Karen Brown, Roberto Caldas, Jorge Calderón, Method Gundidza, Kathryn Gwiazdon, Kirsti Luke, Laura Movilla Pateiro, Marsha Moutrie, Jorge Iván Palacio and Leah Temper. The moderator was Craig Kauffman.

6. The Permanent Representative of Ecuador emphasized that the environmental crises were precipitated by the social, economic, productive and technological transformations brought about by the modern capitalist world, which undermined the balance between humanity and nature. Human existence depended on restoring that balance, and Ecuador had enshrined the concept of "Buen Vivir" (living well) in its 2008 Constitution, in which respect for nature is required and the rights of nature are recognized.

7. The Permanent Representative of India highlighted that understanding the interconnectedness of the Earth's systems made it evident that the sustainability of life on Earth was threatened by current global economies and lifestyles. Long before modern technological advances, humans had understood this interdependence of life on Earth and developed ways to protect the land, waters and seas. Conferring legal rights on natural entities was a measure to protect nature and to sustain that life, as was evident in traditional practices in Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Colombia, Ecuador, India and New Zealand.

8. The Deputy Permanent Representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia emphasized that humans must stop seeing themselves as masters and owners of nature; they must recognize themselves as part of a complex and delicate life system. To establish a non-anthropocentric paradigm, all societies must transform their patterns of production and consumption. The country's Constitution had enshrined the indigenous principles of "Buen Vivir" for living in harmony, balance, equity and solidarity with the Earth, and promoted governance reforms based on Earth jurisprudence for a social transformation towards sustainable production and consumption.

9. A member of the European Parliament stated that humans were still learning how to understand their place in nature and the rights and roles of other living and non-living beings. A lack of understanding and a silo mentality prevented humans from seeing themselves as living ecosystems embedded in larger living systems. The challenge was how to instil an Earth-centred world view using a rights-based approach. Putting a stop to the overconsumption of natural resources might require new legislative frameworks on the environment or a convention regarding nature to complement the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the United Nations was best placed to take the lead on that issue.

10. Another member of the European Parliament noted that the extreme environmental crises required a shift in people's thinking and a fundamental change in the economic system to reflect the intrinsic value of nature, which extended far beyond ecosystem services. The current legal system was not working because the notion of "rights" was too narrow; it must be broadened to extend rights to future generations and to nature. A deep paradigm shift occurs when a theoretical legal approach is replaced by tangible instances in which rights have been extended to natural entities, for example the initiative to give legal standing to Lake Balaton in Hungary.

11. The representative of the global campaign of the Rights of Mother Earth movement[5] asked the United Nations to draft a universal declaration of the rights of Mother Earth. The campaign had nearly 852,000 signatures from people in 122 countries and was gaining momentum through increased public engagement and a growing number of legal cases in support of the rights of nature. Members of the European Parliament had expressed their support for the drafting of such a universal declaration by the United Nations.

[5] See www.rightsofmotherearth.com/.

12. The representative of the World Federation of United Nations Associations described how young people worldwide were engaged in model United Nations programmes. Those popular educational activities exposed youth to global issues being addressed by the United Nations, including Earth jurisprudence, Earth-centred law and ecological economics, and inspired them to become more involved in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Harmony with Nature programme.

13. Expert members of the Harmony with Nature Knowledge Network from Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Mexico, Spain, New Zealand, the United States of America and Zimbabwe addressed the subject of Earth jurisprudence in the implementation of sustainable production and consumption patterns with concrete examples of its unfolding and application from the standpoint of the disciplines they represented.

14. It was highlighted that human rights and constitutional law are evolving towards recognition of the inherent rights of nature, and that human rights, as recognized in international treaties and conventions, depend on a healthy and balanced environment. Earlier this year, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights recognized the right to a healthy environment as a human right. The Court has also recognized the complementarity of environmental rights and the rights of indigenous and tribal peoples. Nature and the environment must be protected not only because of their usefulness to human beings, but also because of their importance to all other living organisms that merit protection in their own right.

15. The experts stressed that an ecological approach to law was required, with tools for restorative justice, the enforcement of the rights of nature, the complex governance of natural resources and cross-fertilization with human rights and the rights of future generations of all species. They shared examples of local governments that had melded laws on the rights of nature with existing legal doctrines recognized by the courts, as well as cases where the rights of nature were being implemented by educating citizens without the need for enforcement by the judicial system. The importance of raising awareness among judges and lawyers of the concept of legal standing for nature was also underlined.

16. The experts noted that the challenge was to create new everyday experiences that accustom people to a new paradigm, and thus give rise to a society where people comprehend nature as their home instead of an endless source of capital. In contrast to the current economic system, in which short-term economic gains are prioritized over long-term human and ecological health, there are alternative strategies and mechanisms, such as the solidarity economy, which is based on the principle of the non-accumulation of capital. Sustainable production and consumption systems depend on humans working in harmony with nature and on local economies geared towards sufficiency as opposed to accumulation.

17. Members of the Harmony with Nature Knowledge Network explained that indigenous peoples worldwide had historically understood the reciprocal and mutually sustaining relationship between humans and all other entities that are part of Mother Earth on the basis of gratitude and respect. One participant shared the experience of the Tūhoe, a Māori iwi (tribe) in New Zealand, which had signed a treaty with the Government recognizing its kinship with elements of nature and recognizing Te Urewera, its historical home, as a living, spiritual being with legal personhood. Similarly, the Constitutional Court of Colombia had recognized the Atrato River and its tributaries as living entities that support other forms of life and culture, making them a subject with rights and deserving of special protection.

18. The need for production and consumption systems based on principles of reciprocity, returning fertility to the soil and helping to ensure the health of non-human elements of nature was underscored throughout the dialogue. The

importance of education and ensuring that students experienced and understood how nature sustains life was also emphasized by the panellists.

19. Moreover, the experts stressed that sustainable production and consumption patterns depended on the continued evolution of legal and economic frameworks that recognized the rights of nature along with the shared responsibility and duty of humans to care for it.

III. Trends in the implementation of Earth-centred law

20. Worldwide, there is a growing commitment to protecting nature, with an increase in the adoption of new legislation granting rights of nature.* In this context, it is important to underscore the collaboration between non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society associations and legislators in drafting legislation that recognizes nature as a subject of rights and or the legal personhood of nature in a number of countries.

21. In some instances, NGOs and civil society associations have informed and advised legislators on the evolution of initiatives, court rulings and legal precedents relating to the rights of nature. In other instances, often as a result of environmental disasters, civil society has acted on behalf of nature and initiated legal action.

22. The recognition of the legal personhood of nature on the basis of customary or indigenous law exemplifies the incorporation of indigenous peoples' cosmogony into the body of Western positive law, enriching it with the vision that humans are one with the natural world and recognizing the fundamental truth of the intrinsic value of nature.

A. National legislation adopted to grant rights of nature

23. On 21 September 2017, the Parliament of Victoria, Australia, passed the Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murron) Act 2017, which became law on 1 December 2017. In the Act, the Yarra River was legally recognized as an indivisible living entity that deserves protection, and the intrinsic connection of the traditional owners to the River and their role as custodians of the land and waterway which they call Birrarung were recognized.

24. Belize, which is home to the largest barrier reef in the western hemisphere, became a world leader in ocean sustainability when the Government introduced legislation to end offshore oil activities. The adoption of an indefinite moratorium that was signed into law on 29 December 2017 in response to global pressure to preserve the reef, which is a World Heritage Site of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), is based on an earlier recognition of nature as a subject of rights.

25. On 21 December 2017, the rights of nature were recognized for the first time under Brazilian law in an amendment to the Organic Law of the municipality of Bonito, in the state of Pernambuco. That development was followed by the adoption of legislation on the rights of nature by the municipality of Paudalho on 25 April 2018, and municipalities in other states are following suit. Such legislation has been enacted through close collaboration between legislators and the NGO "MAPAS" (Métodos de Apoio à Práticas Ambientais e Sociais), which has brought together local

* See www.harmonywithnatureun.org/rightsofnature.

communities and environmental and municipal authorities interested in the rights of nature.

26. On 5 April 2018, the Supreme Court of Colombia issued a historic ruling on climate change and future generations in response to a lawsuit filed by 25 children and young people from Colombia, represented by the NGO Dejusticia. The Court recognized the rights of the Amazon region in Colombia and established that the State had not adequately addressed the problem of deforestation in the region, despite having entered into numerous international commitments and despite the existence of sufficient regulation and jurisprudence on the matter. The Court ordered the President and the Ministry of the Environment of Colombia to formulate an action plan to counteract deforestation in the region and to draw up an intergenerational pact for the life of the Colombian Amazon.

27. That decision followed the ruling by the Constitutional Court of Colombia that the Atrato River was "subject to the rights that implicate its protection, conservation, maintenance and, in this specific case, restoration" in a lawsuit brought by Afro-Colombian organizations, indigenous groups and the NGO Tierra Digna.

28. On 25 September 2017, the President of Costa Rica signed the Mother Earth Peace and Wellness Agreement as a result of an executive decree of 22 April 2016 on Mother Earth. The Agreement resulted from an initiative launched on 21 December 2012 by the Gaia Foundation in Costa Rica and the Mother Earth Council, with delegates from the country's eight indigenous peoples, requesting that a declaration of principles of the conscious evolution of Mother Earth be signed and implemented as a way to assume personal responsibility for the mitigation of climate change. The Agreement recognized the imperative of adding a sense of personal responsibility to the country's goal of converting Costa Rica into a carbon neutral nation so that each Costa Rican citizen could reconnect with Mother Earth by minimizing his or her ecological footprint.

29. In the 2008 Constitution of Ecuador, the rights of nature are guaranteed, and between 2010 and 2017 the Constitutional Court issued a series of mandates protecting nature, including flora and fauna. On 6 April 2018, the Court issued a final verdict on the Vilcabamba River case, confirming the constitutionality of the measures ordered in 2011 to restore the River bank, which had been damaged by road construction. The case dates back to 2010, when a constitutional petition was filed by two local residents on behalf of the River — the first time the constitutional provision on the rights of nature had been invoked in a court of justice on behalf of a river.

30. In India, the decision of the High Court of Uttarakhand to grant rights to the Ganges and Yamuna Rivers, as well as to the Himalayan glaciers within India, inspired the adoption of a resolution by the Legislative Assembly of Madhya Pradesh on 4 May 2017 declaring the Narmada River a living entity and the lifeline of the State. In addition, on 4 July 2018, the High Court of Uttarakhand passed a judgment in which it recognized all animals as legal persons with rights and named all citizens of Uttarakhand as legal guardians with the ability to speak on behalf of animals.

31. As stated in the Charter of the Kanak people of the Loyalty Islands in New Caledonia, humans are an integral part of their ancestral territory, and individual rights are expressed in the collective rights of the group. In observance of the Charter, on 6 April 2016, the Loyalty Islands province adopted the first phase of its environmental code, through which certain elements of nature may be recognized as having their own rights. Valérie Cabanes, a member of the Harmony with Nature Knowledge Network, explained that the Kanak people believe that customary land governance is the best way to protect natural elements as well as to represent their own interests, and they are prepared to endow certain elements of nature with legal personhood.

32. In December 2017, Mount Taranaki in New Zealand was granted legal personhood, as was all Crown-owned land within Egmont National Park (Taranaki Maunga). As noted above, legal status had previously been granted to the Te Urewera and the Whanganui River. The Crown and eight Taranaki iwi signed a record of understanding on Egmont National Park (Taranaki Maunga), making the park the joint responsibility of the local Māori and the Government.

33. In 2018, the Government of New Zealand and the Ngāti Rangi iwi signed a deed of settlement providing for, among other things, a redress framework for the Whangaehu River, known as the Te Waiū-o-te-Ika Framework. The settlement documents recognized the river as a living and indivisible whole, from Te Wai-a-Moe (Crater Lake) to the sea, comprising physical and metaphysical elements that give life and healing to the surroundings and communities.

34. In South Africa, the Supreme Court of Appeal issued a judgment on 1 June 2018 supporting the customary law rights of the Dwesa-Cwebe indigenous communities to harvest mussels on the east coast of the country in accordance with their own ancient system. The communities were able to prove the continued existence of their ancient laws governing fishing and the extraction of mussels, which ensure the healthy survival of the mussel community. The judgement confirmed that customary law and communal ownership systems that had existed long before colonial interventions should be given due authority and respect.

B. Ongoing national legislation granting rights of nature

35. In Brazil, the lawyer Lafayette Sobrinho and the NGO Pachamama filed a lawsuit on behalf of the Doce River, located in the state of Mina Gerais, on 5 November 2017. The request for legal protection of the Doce River was submitted in response to the Bento Rodrigues dam disaster, which occurred on 5 November 2015 and is described as the worst environmental disaster in the history of Brazil. The disaster sparked a humanitarian crisis, as hundreds of people were displaced. It is estimated that around 60 million cubic meters of iron waste flowed into the Doce River, with toxic contamination reaching the Atlantic Ocean.

36. In the city of Fortaleza, Brazil, a public hearing was held on pressing environmental issues raised by communities and local legislators, followed by debates between representatives of academia and civil society. A draft bill on the recognition of the rights of nature is currently being proposed.

37. In France, the Government has initiated a reform to further amend the Constitution of 1958 and the Charter of the Environment of 2004 to include more ecological considerations. Various members of Parliament have tabled over 20 amendments addressing a range of topics, including the rights of living entities, animal welfare, the global commons, the crime of ecocide and the principle of non-environmental regression, thus signalling a trend towards a more Earth-centred constitutional process.

38. In India, religious leaders, inspired by the decision of the Uttarakhand Court and the Legislative Assembly of Madhya Pradesh to grant rights of nature to the Narmada River, submitted a proposal for a national act on the River Ganges to the Prime Minister. The act would provide the sacred River with legal personhood.

39. In the United States, municipalities continue to adopt local laws recognizing the rights of nature. As a first step towards legislation, on 9 July 2018, the Board of Trustees of the town of Crestone, Colorado, adopted, by unanimous consent, a resolution recognizing the rights of nature. The town is working to establish links with the surrounding communities in the San Luis Valley to protect one of the largest

aquifers in the south-western United States, which also serves parts of northern Mexico. The Mayor of Crestone is working with the Geoversiv Foundation, the Earth Law Center and the former City Attorney of Santa Monica, California, who wrote that city's law on the rights of nature.

C. Policy trends relating to the rights of nature

40. In Argentina, constitutional law scholars have presented a public document entitled "Contributions to the reform of the Constitution of the Province of Santa Fe on environmental matters" to the Directorate of Political and Constitutional Reform. The document contains a proposal to recognize the rights of nature in the upcoming reform of the Constitution of the Province.

41. In Aruba, the statutes of the RAIZ political movement promote the rights of nature, including the legal status of natural entities, such as trees, oceans, plants and animals, and the concept of "Biba Bon/Biba Contento" (Sumak Kawsay), according to which humans must live in harmony with nature. Those goals are to be reached by shifting from a view of nature as property under the law to recognizing that nature itself can have rights.

42. On 31 May 2018, the city council of the Dongeradeel municipality in the Netherlands adopted a motion to work actively for the rights of the Wadden Sea ecosystem and for its protection by a new governance authority. The Wadden Sea, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is the largest unbroken system of intertidal sand and mud flats in the world.

43. In Sweden, the Sami Parliament endorsed the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth on 25 May 2018.[7] The Sami, like other indigenous peoples, experience the effects of climate change on their traditional ways on a daily basis. The parliamentary motion, drafted by two female members of the Sami Parliament, stated: "We believe a paradigm shift is needed towards a view where humans understand that we are all part of nature, which is the way indigenous peoples relate to nature. We, the Sami people, believe that we belong to the land, not the other way around."

44. In Uganda, the group Advocates for Natural Resources and Development is working with the Committee on Natural Resources to develop a stronger understanding of Earth jurisprudence and with parliamentarians to promote the inclusion of rights of nature in the National Environment Act.

45. In Ireland and in Northern Ireland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Green Party (*Comhaontas Glas*), in close collaboration with the NGO Nature's Rights, amended its environmental policy document in February 2018, recognizing that nature and the environment must be granted stronger legal rights to exist, to persist, to be maintained and to be restored. The Green Party also requested public consultation and dialogue with countries that have successfully integrated rights of nature into their constitutions and legal frameworks, to develop a proposal to protect the rights of nature within the Constitution of Ireland and to support humans flourishing in harmony with nature.

46. The NGO Nature's Rights has also collaborated with the town council of Frome in the southwest of England to seek a local-level bylaw in which the rights of Rodden Meadow and the River Frome are recognized. The council conducted a public consultation designed by Nature's Rights in which participation was voluntary, and the response was highly positive: 96.6 per cent voted in favour of local empowerment

[7] See A/64/777, annex II.

to protect Rodden Meadow and the River from ecological destruction, and 94 per cent felt that non-human beings have a right to exist. The next step is to prepare a regulatory report and an application, which will include a draft bylaw.

47. The Working Group on Indigenous Populations/Communities in Africa of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, in cooperation with the Gaia Foundation and the African Biodiversity Network, is now developing ways to implement Commission resolution 372, adopted in 2017, on the protection of sacred natural sites and territories, and has begun drafting a new African model law. In the resolution, the role of sacred natural sites in the protection of African ecosystems is acknowledged, as is the role of nature in the realization of African people's rights, including the right to economic, social and cultural development and the right to a satisfactory environment favourable to their development.

48. In Nigeria, the River Ethiope Trust Foundation and the Earth Law Center have completed a draft act for the rights of the River Ethiope, under which it would become the first river in Africa to have legal rights.

49. The Earth Law Center has spearheaded many important efforts to grant rights of nature. The Center has collected signatures from people in 32 countries for an initiative on the rights of the ocean in which the United Nations would be called upon to include the rights of nature in negotiations for an international treaty on the biodiversity of the high seas. The Center has also finalized an Earth law framework for marine protected areas based on a holistic and rights-based approach to nature. Together with the Organization for the Conservation of Cetaceans, based in Uruguay, the Center also is drafting a proposal for the legal rights of marine areas in that country.

50. To protect rivers, the Earth Law Center has updated the draft universal declaration of river rights on the basis of input from experts in the rights of nature worldwide. The declaration now forms the basis of laws being drafted in countries throughout the world. It has been cited in an amicus brief in Argentina and in an amicus brief seeking legal rights for the Anchicayá River in Colombia, presented to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and to the Council of State of Colombia by the Earth Law Center, International Rivers and the International Network of Human Rights.

51. The International Union for Conservation of Nature continues to demonstrate strong support for the rights of nature. The second Inter-American Congress on the Environmental Rule of Law, held in Santiago from 4 to 6 September 2017, focused on the theme "Environmental rule of law trends from the Americas: pollution free, peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development". In its report, the Congress noted that the general secretariat of the Organization of American States, the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Commission on Environmental Law of the International Union for Conservation of Nature, along with key partners, were working to support member States in developing and strengthening their enabling legal and institutional frameworks for the rights embodied in the World Declaration on the Environmental Rule of Law of the International Union for Conservation of Nature, which recognizes the "Right to Nature" in principle 2.

52. The Ecological Law and Governance Association, established at the University of Siena, Italy, in September 2017, provides the institutional framework for the Oslo Manifesto of 2016, which was endorsed by several hundred academics and professionals in environmental law from the International Union for Conservation of Nature. The Siena Statement of Solidarity, developed as an addendum to the Manifesto, provides a framework of law and governance to shift away from environmental law and towards ecological law in harmony with nature.

53. In addition, the Ethics Specialist Group of the World Commission on Environmental Law explored the ethical and legal implications of a rights-based approach to nature in its Biosphere Ethics Initiative and its partnerships with the Center for Environmental Ethics and Law and the Earth Law Center. Those institutions are launching a collaboration with the International Union for Conservation of Nature that will explore jurisprudence on the rights of nature and continue to develop the universal declaration of river rights.

IV. Education on Earth jurisprudence

54. Many universities and institutions featured in the previous report have further strengthened their curricula in relation to Earth jurisprudence and the rights of nature, and such curricula are being implemented at an increasing rate at more academic institutions worldwide. That trend has been accompanied by a rise in advocacy activities to promote public engagement, provide education and generally increase awareness and understanding of the issue.

A. Formal education on Earth jurisprudence

55. In Santa Fe, Argentina, the Faculty of Law and Social Sciences of the National University of the Littoral has continued to expand its programmes and online course to promote knowledge of the rights of nature, in particular through: a postgraduate online course on theory, practice and an interdisciplinary approach to the rights of nature; a winter seminar on activism and tensions in Latin America in relation to the rights of nature; and a Latin American studies seminar on challenges for advocacy in Argentina and Latin America.

56. In Australia, the University of Newcastle offers a summer course on international environmental law, including seminars on the transition from regarding nature as an object to regarding nature as a subject of rights.

57. In Brazil, at the Faculdades de Campinas, a two-credit course on topics related to the United Nations agenda has been established as part of the formal curriculum of the undergraduate programme on international relations. During the first semester of 2018, 25 students attended classes and discussions on Harmony with Nature and explored the concepts of Earth jurisprudence and ecological economics. The outcome was an e-book written by the students on the 2030 Agenda, in particular the importance of standing up for human rights, which contains an analysis of recent trends relating to the agenda item on Harmony with Nature.

58. In São Paulo, Brazil, the Dante Alighieri school has continued its second year of an interdisciplinary project inspired by the United Nations Harmony with Nature programme. The project addresses different fields of knowledge, including biology, chemistry, English, geography, history, mathematics, physics and technology, as these subjects relate to nature.

59. In 2010, the Plurinational State of Bolivia enacted an educational law to ensure that the public education curriculum is consistent with the concepts of living in harmony and balance with Mother Earth. The Law specifies that education in Bolivia must be oriented towards intellectual and material production, creative work and a harmonious relationship with all systems of life, including the consideration of human communities as integral parts of Mother Earth. Those principles have been put into practice in a complementary capacity-building programme for teachers. Since 2012, over 130,000 teachers have been trained, and as of 2013, the programme had been implemented gradually across all primary and secondary public schools.

60. In Montreal, Canada, McGill University continues to strengthen the "Economics for the Anthropocene" programme, a graduate research and training partnership that involves 25 institutions, 80 collaborators and 40 graduate student fellows. The premise of this law and governance research initiative, which is coordinated closely with the Ecological Law and Governance Association, is the need to reframe law and governance towards a mutually enhancing human-Earth relationship, with rigorous reliance on contemporary science and traditional knowledge systems.

61. A new project entitled "Leadership for the Ecozoic", a global partnership initially based at McGill University and the University of Vermont, offers doctoral programmes to: educate and empower new leaders for the Ecozoic; develop a global research-to-action network to heal and restore Earth's life support systems and to define and foster a different mode of inhabiting the Earth; and mobilize and focus higher education resources and communication on mitigating multifaceted, human-induced planetary declines in life support capacity.

62. On 19 April 2018, the President and the Minister of Public Education of Costa Rica inaugurated the "I am the answer" programme, incorporating the principles of the declaration for the conscious evolution of Mother Earth into the public education system. From an early age, Costa Ricans are now being educated to share the values embodied in the Declaration and to participate actively in the fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals. In addition, on 12 December 2016, the National Council of Rectors of Costa Rica agreed to coordinate the activities of public universities in the development of a project on Mother Earth peace trails (Senderos de Paz Madre Tierra). The principles of the declaration are also shared in courses offered by the United Nations-mandated University for Peace and the University of Costa Rica.

63. In Guayaquil, Ecuador, the Universidad de Especialidades Espíritu Santo has integrated the rights of nature into a number of courses, including courses on public international law, constitutional law, global economic development, environmental law and ecology. Particular attention is given to the role of indigenous peoples as key actors in the achievement of sustainable development.

64. In New Zealand, the University of Canterbury has included content on Earth jurisprudence and the rights of nature, in particular on the use of legal personhood to protect natural resources, and indigenous rights are recognized in comparative contexts in public law, resource management law, water resource management and legal ethics. A number of students have chosen the rights of nature as the topic of their undergraduate or honours research projects.

65. The International Earth Trusteeship Gathering, held in The Hague from 22 to 24 June 2018, brought together initiatives on governance, law and legal structures, Earth practices and advocacy to heal the relationship between humanity and the Earth and to fulfil the responsibilities of humans as trustees of the Earth. The goal was to work towards building actions around the seventieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, on 10 December 2018.

66. In Tarragona, Spain, the master's degree programme in environmental law offered by the Tarragona Centre for Environmental Law Studies at the Universitat Rovira i Virgili includes several seminars on the rights of nature. In June 2018, a seminar was held on the topic "Human rights and the rights of nature: state of the art in Latin America".

67. Farnebo Folk High School, in Osterfarnebo, Sweden, has developed a new course curriculum for high school students on the rights of nature and the concept of Buen Vivir. The course will explore the meaning of this profound internal and external transformation through two of the most recent legal concepts: the rights of nature,

which has its roots in indigenous people's relationship with nature, and its Sami counterpart.

68. In Colorado Springs, United States, Colorado College will be introducing the theme of Earth jurisprudence in the course entitled "Sustainability and the Anthropocene" as part of the Talanoa Dialogue and an ethnography project within the community of Crestone, Colorado, that will be formally submitted to the Talanoa Dialogue Portal of the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

69. A group of African professionals from Benin, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe have embarked on the Gaia Foundation's three-year course to become Earth jurisprudence practitioners. The participants will undergo residential training and wilderness experience and complete written and practical assignments guided by indigenous elders and progressive thinkers.

70. In Latin America, a number of universities are offering courses on the rights of nature and nature's legal personhood on the basis of neo-constitutionalism, which offers a new perspective on how to look at and discuss all aspects of law. In the Plurinational State of Bolivia, the Universidad Mayor de San Andrés offers a master's degree programme in constitutional rights and a doctorate in constitutional rights and administration. In Colombia, the Universidad Libre de Colombia offers a master's degree programme in constitutional rights at its locations in Cali and Pereyra. In Ecuador, the Simón Bolívar Andean University offers a master's degree in constitutional rights, including a course on critical constitutionalism. In Spain, the University of Valencia offers a master's degree programme in constitutional rights, including a course on neo-constitutionalism, as well as a master's programme in constitutional rights in Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

71. In October 2017, the European Commission, acting through its Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, financed a three-year cooperation project to develop a new master's programme on the rights of nature and peacebuilding, involving universities in Colombia, Ecuador, France, Italy and Spain, as well as the Court of Justice of the Andean Community and the Secretariat of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation of Ecuador. The kick-off meeting for the programme was held in Quito on 26 and 27 February 2018, and the first dissemination events with stakeholders will be held in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, in September, in Quito in October, and at the ninth international meeting of the Brazilian National Council on Research and Graduate Courses on Law, in October 2018.

72. The Earth Law Center is in the process of drafting an Earth law textbook, which is scheduled for completion in early 2019 and will serve as the first-ever rights of nature textbook for law schools in the United States.

B. Informal education and public engagement on Earth jurisprudence

73. In Australia, the University of Melbourne Centre for Resources, Energy and Environmental Law, together with the Australian Earth Laws Alliance, hosted a research workshop on legal rights for rivers entitled "New developments in the legal status of rivers" in August 2017. The event brought together experts from Australia, New Zealand and South America.

74. In Brasilia, the Conference of Judges and Prosecutors on Water Justice hosted the first International Water Justice Moot Court in March 2018, organized by the World Commission on Environmental Law and the Global Judicial Institute on the Environment. Law students from Brazil, Kenya, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan and the United States (Hawaii and New York) who took part in the event

explored the legal personhood of rivers and the impact of the climate crisis on water law disputes. Students presented their arguments to a panel of high court judges from Australia, Barbados, Mexico, Norway and Thailand, and from countries in East Africa.

75. In September 2018, the Faculdades de Campinas college, in partnership with the World Federation of United Nations Associations, will hold the second session of the International Model United Nations Brazil, including a debate on the topic of Harmony with Nature, to raise awareness among young Latin American students and to ensure that, by 2030, people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature.

76. In September 2017, in Florianópolis, Brazil, the Federal University of Santa Catarina hosted an international seminar on human rights and the rights of nature, which strengthened the dialogue between Brazilian environmental law researchers and the Ecological Law and Governance Association.

77. On 5 November 2017, to mark National Culture Day in Brazil, the NGO Pachamama and representatives of various social movements, indigenous peoples, artists and legal experts from all over Brazil undertook a national mobilization campaign in defence of rivers called "Pororoca", an indigenous word that means "loud and clear" and refers to a tidal bore, a natural phenomenon occurring in certain rivers, including the Amazon and the Ganges.

78. The seventh International Congress on Constitutionalism and Democracy: The New Latin American Constitutionalism was held in Fortaleza, Brazil, from 26 to 29 November 2017 on the theme "Harmony with nature and Buen Vivir". Discussions among intellectuals, lawyers, jurists, representatives of public authorities, activists, indigenous peoples and students from many countries in Latin America led to the adoption of the Charter of Fortaleza, also known as the Pachamama Manifesto. In the outcome document, the Congress called for the immediate promotion of the ethical and legal principles of harmony with nature and the recognition of the rights of Pachamama (Mother Earth).

79. From 12 to 14 June 2018, the Federal University of Ceará in Brazil hosted discussions on ecology, natural resources, ecological economics, environmental education, the rights of nature, environmental management, sustainable development, ethics and spirituality. Participants worked to strengthen the connections between distinct but related areas of knowledge, including the convergence between disciplines and the contributions that the new Latin American constitutionalism had brought to the Harmony with Nature paradigm.

80. The second International Forum for the Rights of Mother Earth, attended by approximately 1,000 people, was held in São Paulo, Brazil, on 3 and 4 June 2018. The Forum was organized through collaboration between the NGO MAPAS, the Secretary of Environment of São Paulo and Councilman Gilberto Natalini, author of the proposed law in which the rights of nature are to be recognized in the city of São Paulo. Experts on legislation on the rights of nature and new constitutionalism, government officials, religious and spiritual leaders and representatives of indigenous people expressed support for the new paradigm establishing rights of nature.

81. After the Forum, the President of MAPAS addressed the members of the general assembly of the Brazilian union of city councillors, who were interested in adopting legislation on the rights of nature in other Brazilian cities. The NGO has offered support for legislators introducing specific public policies for living in harmony with nature, and for farmers who believe that agribusinesses have damaged the environment and who would like to develop farming projects in harmony with nature.

82. In Quito, the Brazilian National Council on Research and Graduate Courses on Law and the Simón Bolívar Andean University will organize the ninth International Meeting of the National Council from 17 to 19 October 2018 on the theme "Empirical research in law: the new Latin American constitutionalism and the challenges for law theory, State theory and law education". Topics will include environmental law, sustainability and the rights of nature, as well as a workshop on Harmony with Nature that will feature members of the United Nations Harmony with Nature Knowledge Network.

83. In June 2018, the Maison de la Recherche en Sciences Humaines hosted the fourth Tony Oposa Intergenerational Moot Court, sponsored by universities and organizations from various countries, in Caen, France. Students debated the protection of current international law for present and future generations, and many emphasized the importance of indigenous environmental knowledge and stewardship of nature as part of the cosmogony of indigenous people.

84. In Blismes, France, the Triglav Circle hosted gatherings focused on problems of the environment, rurality and agriculture, and the enrichment of the current Sustainable Development Goals as inspired by the encyclical letter "Laudato Si". The Circle emphasized the role of the spiritual in human affairs by addressing the limitations of instrumental rationality. Participants noted efforts in the region to introduce permaculture and biodynamic and organic farming to revive the countryside and small towns by treating their land and animals with love and respect.

85. In Bali, Indonesia, in April 2018, the Green School hosted a one-week Green Educator Course for a group of nearly 40 teachers, directors and employees from educational institutions in different countries. The course included workshops on the United Nations Harmony with Nature programme and on the theme "Rights and voice of Mother Earth", and participating teachers committed themselves to including Earth jurisprudence in school curricula from kindergarten to high school.

86. In Italy, in follow-up to the international conference entitled "How to govern the ecosystem? A multidisciplinary approach", held at the University of Bologna in early 2017 in support of the United Nations Harmony with Nature programme, the Department of Law of the University of Bologna School of Law published an e-book under the same title. The publication contains all the proceedings of the conference and articles by contributing scholars, many of whom are members of the United Nations Harmony with Nature Knowledge Network.

87. In addition, on 16 and 17 April 2018, the Flaminia Foundation of Ravenna and the il Cerchio association, together with the University of Bologna School of Law, sponsored a conference on alternate forms of justice within and outside Western models, which featured a speech by Professor Simona Fraudatario of the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal about her article on environmental justice and the rights of Mother Earth.

88. In May 2018, in Lecce, Italy, in partnership with the Centro di Ricerca Euroamericano at the University of Salento, a national festival on sustainable development was organized, including the promotion of the celebration of Earth Day in Italy, towards the realization of a permanent seminar on constitutional ecology and the creation of a dissemination laboratory based on the United Nations Harmony with Nature programme. In addition, the establishment of a Harmony with Nature working group for the elaboration of a constitutional charter of the ecosystem and guidelines for demo-diversity: democracy in biodiversity as international working documents was suggested. A number of participants joined the Global Ecological Integrity Group, which disseminates information on the activities of the United Nations Harmony with Nature programme to other universities.

89. In Puebla, Mexico, from 17 to 22 March 2018, the first Living Rivers Forum and Festival Atoyac Xicome was held on channel restoration in and the protection of the Atoyac River, setting a national precedent from a multicultural and multidisciplinary platform. The Forum and Festival involved community members, members of the business community, legislators, scientists, philosophers, ecologists, artists, young people, guardians of tradition and social leaders. The meeting provided an inclusive space for reflection, analysis, consciousness and debate regarding the challenges of the sustainable management of water, including legislative initiatives for granting rights to the Atoyac River.

90. The outcome of the Forum included the creation of the National Network of Rivers of Mexico, the signing of commitments on the rights of the Atoyac River, in particular "Living River 2018–2031", the monitoring of compliance with the governing plan, which includes 39 Government actions, and the legal statement declaring the Atoyac River a protected natural area.

91. In Veracruz, Mexico, from 16 to 20 March 2018, the first Cumbre Tajin Festival was held. The festival was focused on living in harmony with nature through ecological recommendations, granting rights of nature and studying indigenous traditions and their relationship with Mother Earth.

92. In May 2018, in Tarragona, Spain, in conjunction with the Tarragona Centre for Environmental Law Studies and the Tarragona Environmental Law Students Association, the Universitat Rovira i Virgili hosted the third Tarragona International Environmental Law Colloquium. Discussions focused on balancing the rights of nature and human rights in an Earth-centred legal paradigm, the rights of nature in the European Union and the recognition of the rights of rivers, among other topics. The Centre also organized and participated in the twelfth international seminar on environmental, constitutional and international dialogue, held in Palmas, Brazil, and Quito, Ecuador, on the state of law, the environment and nature, at which the rights of nature and well-being were the main topics.

93. In Geneva, the NGO Objectif Sciences International hosted its sixth annual international conference on the rights of nature on 11 and 12 December 2017. The conference brought together more than 30 speakers from networks working on initiatives relating to the rights of nature, as well as jurists. The next conference will be held on 11 and 12 December 2018.

94. The Gaia Foundation in the United Kingdom and partner organizations across Africa are developing an African Earth jurisprudence movement. The first cohort of African Earth jurisprudence practitioners, including individuals from Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe, graduated from the Foundation's three-year training programme in July 2017 and have become spokespersons for respecting the laws of nature and reconnecting with the Earth. Through community dialogues, public presentations, radio, television and print media, they are engaging with local, national and international audiences. African voices for Earth jurisprudence were represented at the eighth interactive dialogue on Harmony with Nature, at the NiceFuture meeting held in Switzerland, entitled "Au coeur des temps", with transition actors, farmers, foresters, the scientific community and indigenous leaders, and at the International Forum for Well-Being organized by the Comité catholique contre la faim et pour le développement-Terre solidaire in France, among other forums.

95. The Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature continued its programme of activities for the adoption and implementation of legal systems in which the rights of nature are recognized, respected and enforced. During the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Bonn, Germany, in November 2017, the Global Alliance hosted the fourth International Rights of Nature Tribunal, a two-day event for the simulated

adjudication of cases from across the globe, exposing the significant role legal systems play in enabling climate change and global environmental degradation. At the International Tribunal, cases from 19 countries were heard in mock trials. Witnesses gave first-hand accounts of their experience of living near fracking operations, oil wells, refineries and coal mines; of how nature is suffering because of such destructive activities; and of how defenders of Mother Earth are persecuted and criminalized. The Tribunal found that, in all cases, systematic and severe violations of the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth had been committed and had often been accompanied by human rights violations.

96. Similarly, the Global Atlas of Environmental Justice, a participatory research project involving a significant number of institutions, entails mapping ecological conflicts and the mobilization of citizens against life-threatening extraction activities around the world.

97. The World Federation of United Nations Associations, at its model United Nations Conference, held a discussion on Harmony with Nature in February 2018 at United Nations Headquarters in New York. The discussion was based on the report of the World Federation of United Nations Associations on Harmony with Nature, which drew on the work of the United Nations Harmony with Nature programme. The theme was allocated to a simulated General Assembly committee, and high school students engaged in a general debate in which they delivered statements on Harmony with Nature before drafting and adopting by consensus a resolution on the agenda item.

98. The Earth Law Center helped to launch an Earth law club at Vermont Law School, the first law student body focusing exclusively on the rights of nature, and helped to organize a mock trial on the rights of nature in middle and high schools in the United States.

V. Conclusion

99. Earth jurisprudence continues to be incorporated into national law in an increasing number of countries worldwide. In some instances, the judiciary has demanded State action affirming or restoring the rights of rivers, forests or glaciers, while in other instances, municipal or local legislative bodies have recognized the rights of nature.

100. The inclusion of Earth jurisprudence in education, through both formal and informal processes, has also gained momentum in recent years. Increasing numbers of schools, universities and institutions are designing and delivering programmes and projects in their curricula that focus on an Earth-centred paradigm, thereby leading to the dissemination of Earth jurisprudence in the professional and public spheres. Furthermore, many of the expert members of the Harmony with Nature Knowledge Network are prolific writers who have either participated in the making of film documentaries or been consulted by filmmakers on the rights of nature.[8]

101. Academics, universities, non-governmental organizations, civil society groups, federal courts and research institutes worldwide have been hosting seminars, congresses and debates at the local, national and international levels to advance Earth jurisprudence and to provide clarity on the transition from environmental laws to legislation on the rights of nature. Those varied initiatives have significantly increased public attention to and understanding of Earth jurisprudence and of the need to live in harmony with nature.

[8] www.harmonywithnatureun.org/references.

102. In many of the activities addressed in the present report, NGOs and civil society associations have been important constituencies. They have initiated campaigns and drafted various declarations on the rights of nature and Earth jurisprudence. In addition, they have called upon the United Nations to engage in drafting a universal declaration of the rights of Mother Earth that reflects the growing worldwide commitment to protecting the Earth and future generations of all species.

103. The shift from a human-centred to an Earth-centred or non-anthropocentric world view and the resulting changes in law and policy have been possible thanks to the strong commitment of members of the Harmony with Nature Knowledge Network. Its members are working to ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information on and awareness of sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature, as stated in target 12.8 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

104. The United Nations is committed to remaining conversant with recent and forthcoming transformations and actions in law, policy, education and public engagement with regard to Earth jurisprudence and with the increasing number of public declarations, statements and calls to restore a respectful relationship with the Earth.

105. The expanding Harmony with Nature Knowledge Network, which consists of expert practitioners, thinkers and academics, is encouraged to continue to advance the implementation of sustainable living in harmony with nature and to develop communities of practice across a range of disciplines, from the natural and social sciences, physics, chemistry, biology, ecology, economics, sociology, law, ethics, spirituality and anthropology to medicine and linguistics.

106. They are further encouraged to carry out a baseline review and the compilation of existing and emerging legal precedents, public and government declarations and calls for a universal declaration of the rights of Mother Earth, which could establish guiding principles and common positions for Member States to initiate a global conversation on the subject.

107. Finally, the approaches and actions being taken by Member States, civil society groups and other stakeholders to foster sustainable living in harmony with nature will continue to be showcased and supported through the Harmony with Nature website (www.harmonywithnatureun.org).